

# NWS La Crosse

## Spotter Reference Sheet

2014

### What to Report

Tornadoes  
Funnel Clouds  
Wall Clouds

Hail (Size and amount)  
Wind Gusts (40 mph or greater)  
Shelf or Roll Clouds  
Flooding / Mudslides  
Heavy rain (1" or more per hour)

Damage  
Injuries/Fatalities

Winter Precipitation (snowfall, ice)

### How to Report

Follow your community's established reporting procedure, or...

#### Contact NWS La Crosse via:

Phone: **(608) 784-7214 *unlisted***  
**(800) 848-2199 *unlisted***

Ham Radio: WX9ARX

Internet: [weather.gov/lacrosse](http://weather.gov/lacrosse)

Email: [nws.lacrosse@noaa.gov](mailto:nws.lacrosse@noaa.gov)

Twitter: @NWSLaCrosse or #nwsarx

Say: • **Who** you are  
• **What** was observed  
• **Where** you are  
• **Where** the weather occurred  
• **When** it occurred

### Reporting Hail Size

- Reference to the size of a coin or game ball (no marbles, please)

Or measure it:



### Estimating Wind Speed

25-31 mph	Large branches in motion, whistling in power lines
32-38 mph	Whole trees in motion
39-46 mph	Twigs and small branches break off trees, wind impedes walking
47-54 mph	Many small twigs, branches, leaf litter down; towers or shingles down?
55-63 mph	Roof damage; small trees blown over or uprooted; crop damage
64-75 mph	Widespread damage occurs; large trees blown over and uprooted
>75 mph	Severe and extensive damage; corn flat; trees uprooted; windows broke

### Helpful Internet Links

NWS La Crosse	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/lacrosse">www.weather.gov/lacrosse</a>
<b>Spotter Activation Page</b>	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/lacrosse/activation">www.weather.gov/lacrosse/activation</a>
NWS La Crosse Spotter Page	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/lacrosse/?n=skywarn">www.weather.gov/lacrosse/?n=skywarn</a>

Improving Spotter Reports	<a href="http://www.wdtdb.noaa.gov/modules/spotters/player.html">http://www.wdtdb.noaa.gov/modules/spotters/player.html</a>
Basic Spotter Guide	<a href="http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/brochures/SGJune6-11.pdf">http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/brochures/SGJune6-11.pdf</a>
Role of the Spotter	<a href="http://www.meted.ucar.edu/spotter_training/spotter_role/">http://www.meted.ucar.edu/spotter_training/spotter_role/</a>
Spotter Convective Basics	<a href="http://www.meted.ucar.edu/spotter_training/convective/">http://www.meted.ucar.edu/spotter_training/convective/</a>
El Reno, OK Case Study	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/lacrosse/?n=elreno">www.weather.gov/lacrosse/?n=elreno</a>



## Activation Guidelines

- Have an activation and notification plan that is well tested and documented so everyone in the spotter group knows the routine.
- The spotter group leader or coordinator needs to be pro-active and organized. This does take a big commitment. Backup coordinators are essential for vacation coverage or times of very active weather.
- Keep abreast of the latest weather threats. What is the potential hazardous weather that day? What is the National Weather Service expecting? Use resources like:
  - **Outlooks (graphical and text)\*\***
  - NOAA Weather Radio
  - Commercial radio or television
  - Internet
- Activation should be done anytime strong to severe storms approach. This means monitoring radar and upstream conditions more than relying strictly on text information (watches / warnings).
- Use **OUTLOOKS** for activation guidance. A **WATCH** should be a “heads up” that severe weather is possible soon (next 6 hours), but spotter activation may not be needed immediately. Always deploy when a **WARNING** is issued, but ideally spotters should be activated and in place **BEFORE** a warning is issued.
- A Spotter Activation Notification System (SANS) is used by the La Crosse National Weather Service office to provide further guidance when spotters are needed. This notification can send email messages and text messages, and will be updated on the following web page:

**[www.weather.gov/lacrosse/activation](http://www.weather.gov/lacrosse/activation)**

- Lead time needed for activation will vary depending on the nature of the storms (movement speed or pace of storm intensification) and time needed from initial notification to proper spotter location.
- Spotter activation criteria may vary from group to group. Typically spotter groups should be deployed for tornado, flash flood, and high wind threats, but may also be needed for large hail and other phenomena which assist with storm trends. Spotters may also observe storm features or severe weather that was not initially expected by forecasters thus giving more lead time for possible warnings.
- Ensure your reports get to the National Weather Service, even if they are after the storms have passed. Specific observations or details are always useful.
- Photos or video can be sent to: **[nws.lacrosse@noaa.gov](mailto:nws.lacrosse@noaa.gov)**